

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE**

**OF THE**

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**Minutes**

A regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on October 3, 2007.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, Chairperson  
Leg. Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, Vice-Chairperson  
Leg. Kate M. Browning  
Leg. Lou D'Amaro  
Leg. Edward P. Romaine (not present)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer  
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk  
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office  
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office  
Fran Siems, Legislative Aide  
Greg Moran, Aide to Chairperson Nowick  
Brian Bielanski, County Executive's Office  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader  
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro  
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader  
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director  
Dennis Brown, County Attorney's Office  
Carol Ghiorso Hart, Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum  
Steven Gittelman, President of the Board of Trustees Vanderbilt Museum  
Karen Gaconnier, Director of Maritime Museum  
Diane Schurig  
And all other interested parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

**(THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 1:19 PM)**

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

I'd like to call this meeting to order. And we'll start with the salute to the flag with Legislator Browning.

***SALUTATION***

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the Parks and Recreation Committee. Sorry for the delay in starting. We have a few cards here, so we'll start right now with Carol Hart from the Vanderbilt Museum.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Do you want to discuss the appropriations?

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Hold on. Does Carol still want to talk?

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

If you want us to talk to you when you get to our appropriations, we'll be glad to, if you'd like.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

No, you can come up now. Carol, Steve, yeah, you can come up together. Okay.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

We have two. Good afternoon, everybody. We have two pieces of legislation before you.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Bring that closer.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Two pieces of legislation before you appropriating funds; one, for American Disabilities Act, and the other for necessary equipment at the planetarium. And as we always do, we come to the Committee to answer any questions that members of the Committee might have regarding the proposed legislation.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Does anybody on the Committee have any questions about the legislation concerning the Vanderbilt? As I understand it, this is for the -- how do you say it, Goto -- the Goto camera; is that correct?

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

We call it the Goto projector.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Projector. And of course, without a projector --

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

There's no planetarium.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

There is no planetarium. Okay. And the second one, did anybody have a question on that? Okay. You are really off scott-free here unless you want to --

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Well, I think the only thing I would say to you is -- well, you already know. The ADA stuff is for sheet -- is for glass so that if a wheelchair was to bump into the glass, that someone wouldn't be injured.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Okay.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

The projector is a key element in maintaining the planetarium. Without it, the museum would close.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Well, what I would say to you then is if this Committee is not badgering you with questions, it's probably a good idea --

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Disappear.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

-- to say we'll wait around for the IR.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

We'll wait around. I just want to introduce Carol Ghiorsi Hart who is currently our Acting Director. And she is also Deputy Director on a permanent basis.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Well, welcome Carol Hart. And, of course, I know Carol for many years, having served on the Smithtown Historical Society; and certainly did a wonderful job there. I'm sure they'll miss you, but we'll see you around Smithtown. Lots of good luck.

**MS. HART:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Okay. We have Diane Schurig.

**MS. SCHURIG:**

I'm going to decline.

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Doesn't want to speak.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Doesn't want to speak. Karen --

**MS. GACONNIER:**

Gaconnier.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Karen, come on up.

**MS. GACONNIER:**

Thank you very much. Can you hear me? Is this on?

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Come closer.

**MS. GACONNIER:**

A little better.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Yes.

**MS. GACONNIER:**

Okay. Thank you. I appreciate this. This is actually my first time at one of these meetings. And I just came to introduce myself. My name is Karen Gaconnier and I'm the new Director of the Long Island Maritime Museum. I was brought on board just about a month ago. And we're looking to set up a number of new initiatives that I just wanted to introduce and make you all familiar with, what our vision is, what our plan is and where we're looking to bring the museum at this point.

Right now we have a number of key elements that are going to focus on education. And we are looking specifically to charter a number of new workshops and programs through six different school districts with the participation and support of Suffolk Transportation to put together workshops for educational programs beginning with the elementary level up to the middle school, high school and even teacher PDP, Professional Development hours. So we are really looking -- and you will be seeing, a lot more activity from the Maritime Museum that's going to focus solely on the education of environment and other -- and other facilities too, the community and to the school districts themselves.

We are also -- we have the benefit of having a new educational workshop provided free of charge to us within an existing structure of our garage. And that was at one point a classroom. We're bringing that back that so we will be able to provide students with touch-tanks, computer stations and a hands-on environment so that -- so that they can learn and have material reinforced to them.

I have been meeting with a number of the superintendents from a number of different school districts. And we've built together workshops and labs that map specifically to New York State curriculum so that each student in each grade level will now have a working hands-on lab that they can go to at any point in time with transportation provided by the museum to be able to participate and have those programs mapped directly to what they're doing in the schools.

So at this point, I'm not here to ask for anything. I just wanted this to be an informational kind of an introduction so that you know where we're going and what we're looking to do and to answer any questions that you may have.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Well, we welcome you. Your enthusiasm is wonderful.

**MS. GACONNIER:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

And it will be nice to be hearing from you from time to time. Thank you.

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Thank you.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Good luck.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Yes, good luck to you.

**MS. GACONNIER:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

I see that Tracy Bellone is not going to be able to make it today, but we have a representative here. Do you have anything to address the Committee or you're just here for questions?

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

I'm just here for questions.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Okay.

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

And then we have comments on a couple of the resolutions.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Okay. So we'll go right to tabled resolutions.

## **TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

Effie Gicas is not here today so --

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Motion to table.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Second.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

**1596, appointing Effie Gicas as a member of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Commission. (Horsley)** Motion to table by Legislator Viloria-Fisher, second by Legislator D'Amaro. All in favor? Opposed? **1596 is tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1. Not present Leg. Romaine)**

**1817, requiring the screening of all applicants for seasonal employment in the Parks Department. (Losquadro)**

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Motion to table.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Motion to table by Legislator Losquadro -- I'm sorry -- motion by Legislator D'Amaro, seconded by Legislator Viloria-Fisher. All in favor? Opposed. **1817 is tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1. Not present Leg. Romaine)**

## **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

**1926, appropriating funds in connection with the replacement of the Goto Projector at Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Planetarium. (Cooper)**

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Motion to approve.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Motion to approve by Legislator Browning, seconded by myself. All in favor?

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Yes.

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

The County Executive's Office would just ask that this be tabled for one more cycle. He has been trying to reach out to the sponsor on this, but he hasn't had a chance to hook up on it and ask if you would consider tabling it for just one cycle.

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Why? Do you know why? This was in the Capital Budget for a longtime.

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

I don't know. I wasn't available to speak with him this morning, but I was asked to ask for one more cycle.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Has he reached out to the sponsor? Because I saw the sponsor today. He seemed -- he didn't seem to have any questions on it.

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

I don't know that he has, although I do know that he intends to.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

How about we discharge without recommendation? And this way in the interim -- okay. I'll make a motion to discharge. Is that all right with everybody?

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Well, before you call that vote, since Mr. Gittelman is still here, maybe I can ask a question.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Sure.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Just to clarify something in my mind. Hi, Steve.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

How are you doing?

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

This is a capital project that's already in the budget. This is merely appropriating the funds.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Correct.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

The consideration here from the Operating Budget, of course, would be the interest we pay on the debt eventually. What's your timing? Is there a problem with a delay or tabling today? Does it affect what you're doing?

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

There's a couple of problems. Okay. One is that the County Executive stated earlier on the record that he was sunsetting this particular bill; that if it did not pass in 2007, he was not going to -- there's no legal -- it's not legally binding, but he was going to kill it. All right?

The second thing is, is that I'm fairly confident that the County Executive's Office has been in contact with the sponsoring Legislator, because I spoke to him last night. And he said he thought everything would be go fine in this Committee. That was my impression.

The third thing is, is that we're going to be on -- this usually does happen to us where things are postponed, and then we end up four bills on top of each other. And that usually causes us to be put in a position of asking for too much all at once. And we have two more bills coming down later in the year. If you postpone it a cycle, it's going to put us at a significant disadvantage. Plus, every time we postpone this, which seem to be years now, whenever we postpone it, we -- the risk profile increases.

There was one other thing. I'm sorry to interject. I do understand that the County Executive circulated an e-mail. And in that e-mail he -- it was stated that he was having problems because we were not communicative with the County Executive. If the County Executive wants me up in his office right now or any other time, day or night, I'm there. And we do not know -- we have not been asked by the County Executive for a meeting or any member of the government that we haven't responded to our knowledge.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Well, that was my point. I mean, this is in -- this is a capital project in the Capital Budget. A policy decision has been made. The resolution itself states it has a high ranking when it comes to priority. So in deference to the County Executive's request, I would take it under consideration. And that's why I'm asking you why -- or whether that would have a significant impact; if a delay would have a significant impact on the project. And you're telling me, yes, it would?

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Yes, it would.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Right. Mr. Bielanski, can you give us any further information as to what the reasoning is for the request to table for a cycle?

**MR. BIELANSKI:**

It's just that the County Executive would like to speak with the sponsor and hasn't had the opportunity to do so at this point. And just if you would take that under consideration in making your decision.

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Madam Chair, if I may? And then we'll go to Budget Review, but -- well, Lance, you worked -- when I was Chair of Parks, you worked on this with me years ago. I think this has been in the Capital Budget for eight years, am I correct?

**MR. REINHEIMER:**

Yeah, it's been several years. Part of our concern is the timing. It takes approximately nine months to build the machine. Our concern is that this is done and they have enough lead time so that they can schedule the installation, close down the planetarium, which is going to interrupt their revenue. I know the museum, from talking to the museum, wants to do it during, I think, February of '08 -- I mean, '09. So the longer this is delayed, that may impact the scheduling and the construction and preparation of putting the machine in.

There's also a second component of this in next year's operating -- Capital Budget that does the second half. This is a projector. I think the second half is the sound system and associated equipment.

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

I think this is the associated equipment. I mean, we are currently keeping the current projector working on a patch-work basis. I mean, it is -- it is slowly failing. The longer we delay, the greater the risk that the museum will be forced to shut down, because we cannot operate without the \$400,000 in revenue that this -- this represents.

**D.P.O. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Madam Chair, if I may, if there's a compelling reason why the County Executive has asked us to table it, I think he can make the case between now and the 16th, which is when we meet. It's, you know, two weeks hence. So there's plenty of time to talk to Legislators. And I think we should go ahead with the motion to approve.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Well, I'm going to withdraw my motion to discharge without recommendation given the fact that we do have two weeks until the next meeting. It's not next week, it's the week after. I did speak to Legislator Cooper today, who thought this was a go. So I don't know if the County Exec has reached out to him yet, but I got the feeling maybe not yet. So we have two weeks. We have a motion to approve by Legislator Viloría-Fisher, seconded by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Opposed? Okay. **1926 is approved (VOTE: 4-0-0-1. Not present Leg. Romaine)**

**1928, appropriating funds in connection with modification for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum. (Cooper)** I'm going to make a motion to approve.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Second.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Seconded by Legislator D'Amaro. All in favor? Opposed? **1928 is approved. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1. Not present Leg. Romaine)**

**MR. GITTELMAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:**

Does anybody have anything else for the Committee? If not, I'll take a motion to adjourn by Legislator Viloría-Fisher, second by myself. All in favor? Opposed? This meeting is adjourned.

**(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:34 PM)**

**{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**